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Combating European Anti-Semitism Act of 2017

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 672, the Combating Anti-Semitism Act of 2017, sponsored by my friend NITA LOWEY. I and all of our fellow Co-Chairs of the Bi-Partisan Task Force for Combating Anti-Semitism are original cosponsors.

Among its provisions, the bill would require the State Department to include in existing annual reports information about the security challenges and needs of European Jewish communities and European law enforcement. This report would also document related U.S. government efforts to partner with European law enforcement agencies and civil society groups.

H.R. 672 is important and timely. As witnesses testified at a hearing I chaired in March on “Anti-Semitism Across Borders,” physical attacks on European Jewish communities, and other forms of anti-Semitic hatred, remain rampant on the continent. Rabbi Andy Baker, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism and Director of International Jewish Affairs at the American Jewish Committee noted that even after the deadly anti-Semitic attacks in Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen, “problems still remain. Governments have taken different approaches, and some only in stop-gap measures.” Rabbi Baker also emphasized that “We need to be clear-eyed

in confronting and combating anti-Semitism, which manifests itself on both the right and the left.”

At the same hearing, Paul Goldenberg, Director of the Security Community Network and Senior Advisor to the Rutgers University Faith-Based Communities Security Program, warned that “Ever-more connected, extremist groups in the United States are borrowing, adapting and enhancing the tactics and strategies adopted in Europe.” This is an especially sobering warning, given the man recent anti-Semitic incidents here in the United States.

Mark Weitzman, Director of Government Affairs for the Simon Wiesenthal Center, emphasized that “Fighting antisemitism has always been a bipartisan commitment and in today’s fractured political world it is more necessary than ever that the U.S. maintain its diplomatic and moral leadership in this issue. . . . we would strongly suggest that the position [of Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism] even be upgraded, to that of Ambassador, thus demonstrating the importance attached by our government to this issue.”

H.R. 672 is an example of such bi-partisanship. It would ensure that the Special Envoy, other U.S. officials, the Congress, and civil society—especially European Jewish communities that their security groups—have key information to act fully and effectively. With the right information, and robust action, the United States can help ensure the safety and security of Jewish communities in Europe and elsewhere.